

January 31-Genesis 31

Sometimes it is extremely hard to do the right thing. The world we live in is full of difficult people and temptation is often strong to operate the way everyone else does. Simply put, it is easy to begin to live and work by the world's standards. Jacob was certainly no different than the rest of us in this regard. In fact, Jacob and Leah can be examples to us of what it looks like to give into this temptation. Genesis 30 finds Jacob in a difficult situation. He had been mistreated by Laban. He had been tricked by him into taking Leah instead of Rachel as his wife, and according to verse 6; Laban had changed Jacob's wages and "cheated" him 10 times. No one could blame Jacob for wanting to leave and start over. In fact, God had commanded Jacob to leave in verse 13.

Jacob's departure is not wrong, in fact it is in obedience to God's command, however as he begins to make preparations he decides to not be upfront about what was going on. Instead Jacob "tricked Laban the Aramean, by not telling him that he intended to flee." (verse 20). Instead of returning good for evil, Jacob decided to interact just as sinfully towards Laban. As if dishonesty wasn't bad enough, verse 29 shares with us that Rachel was up to no good as well, "Rachel stole her father's household gods." So, here we have quite the combination, Jacob is lying and Rachel is stealing! The downward spiral in this chapter is remarkable. In verse 13 Jacob heeds the call of God to and yet by verses 20 and 29 he and his wife have turned from faithful obedience to dishonesty and theft!

We don't know why Jacob wasn't truthful and Rachel stole, but it isn't too much of a leap to think that maybe the motivation was revenge. After all, the text does tell us repeatedly that Laban treated Jacob poorly. I wonder if Jacob and Rachel didn't feel justified in their actions. We aren't totally sure, but what we do know from our own sinful inclinations is that we can talk ourselves into some pretty bad decisions. It is tempting to believe that our misdeeds are the results of someone who is simply "getting what's coming to them."

It is into that type of mindset that Peter writes in 1 Peter 3:9 "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." Peter here is instructing us to do something that is very difficult. In fact it goes against every inclination in our fallen nature. He says do not treat others as they treat you, instead bless them! But, how in the world can we bless a person that curses us? Peter goes on to say that we bless those that curse us because we will inherit a blessing.

What is that blessing? It is ultimately that we would spend eternity with Christ, the one who refused to return evil for evil. After all, He is the one who came and lived amongst a generation that largely rejected Him so that He could redeem those who would believe. In short, we treat others with love and dignity not because of them earning our love but because we want to model the one who loved us while we were unlovable! And, our motivation for this love is an eternity of riches that dwarf any short term fulfillment we may gain by returning evil for evil. May we live with eternity in mind as we love people who are difficult to tolerate!